Submission by the Town of Garrett Park

to

the Maryland Historical Trust

to

Request a Finding on the Impact of a Proposed Sidewalk Construction Project on Specific Historic Properties and the Historic Character of the Town

Updated September, 2017

Introduction

On August 14, 2012, the Town of Garrett Park received a letter from the Maryland State Highway Administration dated August 7, 2012 notifying the Town that it had been awarded a grant under the Safe Routes to Schools program to design and construct two sidewalk and curb segments in the town, as follows:

- On Oxford Street from the intersection of Oxford and Montrose to the intersection of Oxford and Weymouth on the south side of the street
- On Kenilworth Avenue from the intersection of Kenilworth and Waverly to the intersection of Kenilworth and Argyle on the west side of the street

And to reconstruct an existing sidewalk and curb

- On Clermont and Montrose Avenues from the intersection of Clermont and Strathmore on the west side of the street to Clermont and Montrose and then to the intersection of intersection of Montrose and Waverly on the east side of the street.

There is also a stormwater management component to the project.

A previous submission on June 2, 2016 dealt with the potential impacts of this project upon specific historic properties along the routes and the possible impact of the overall project upon the historic character of the town. This submission updates the previous one.

After completing preliminary design, on February 8, 2016, the Garrett Park Town Council voted to reaffirm its decision to design and construct the sidewalk project. We have now completed and provided to the Maryland Historical Trust the 65% design. This design information has been posted on our website and is available to all interested parties, including the consulting parties. We hope that this document provides the information which would be appropriate to allow the Town and the Maryland Historical Trust to complete our discussions of the potential historical impacts and possible mitigating actions.

The remainder of this submission is divided into eight sections, as described on the next page.

Contents

Purpose of the project

Since this project is funded by a Safe Routes to Schools grant, it is specifically designed to enhance the safety of children going to and from school, as well as encouraging walking and biking to and from school by providing a path separate from traffic. The particular segments chosen were those that would extend existing sidewalks along routes that children currently use to go to school, as well as rehabilitating one path to school which has deteriorated to the extent that some children are walking in the street to avoid the damaged sections of sidewalk.

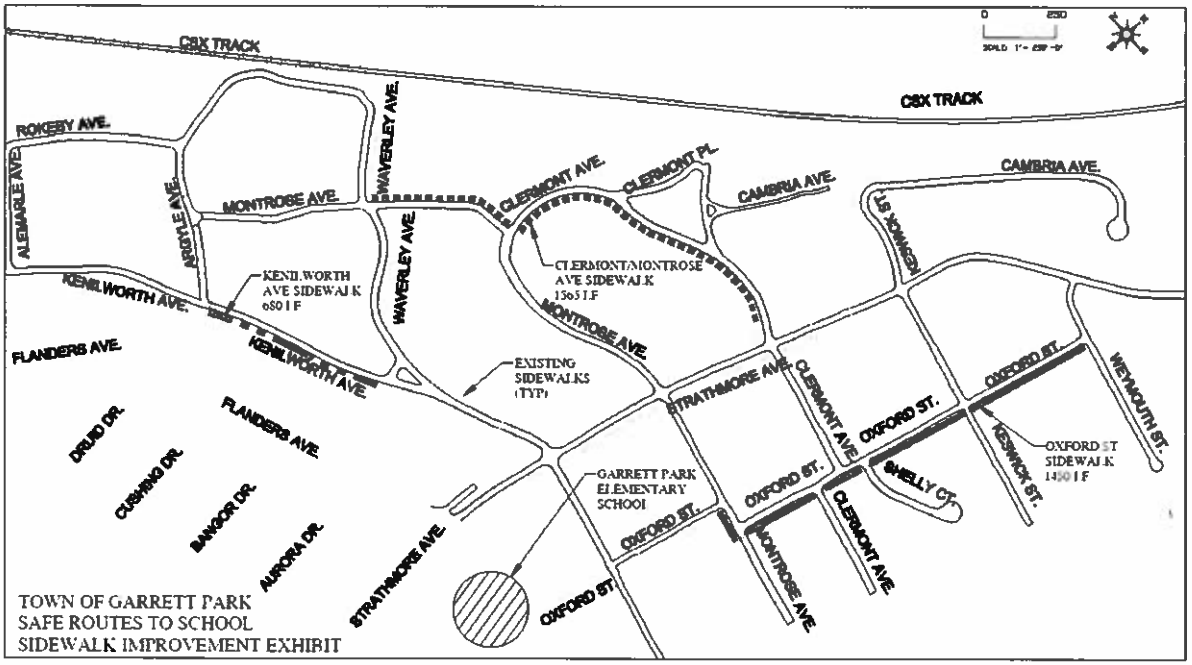
A sidewalk, however, not only provides separation from traffic during times when children are traveling to and from school. It also provides a safe way for them to walk and to ride their bikes away from traffic at other hours, and permits them greater freedom to visit friends without having to contend with (or minimizing) interactions with traffic. It enhances the safety of parents accompanying children going to and from school, particularly when they are accompanied by even younger brothers and sisters, or are pushing a stroller.

A sidewalk is of particular value to persons of any age with disabilities. A blind or deaf person, those with developmental disabilities, individuals using wheel chairs or crutches, and people who have balance problems, difficulty walking steadily or moving out of the way of traffic quickly benefit from a path which provides separation from trucks and automobiles. A sidewalk helps not only those who are young and may have not developed the judgment necessary to deal effectively with traffic, but also elderly individuals who no longer have the physical ability to evade traffic problems.

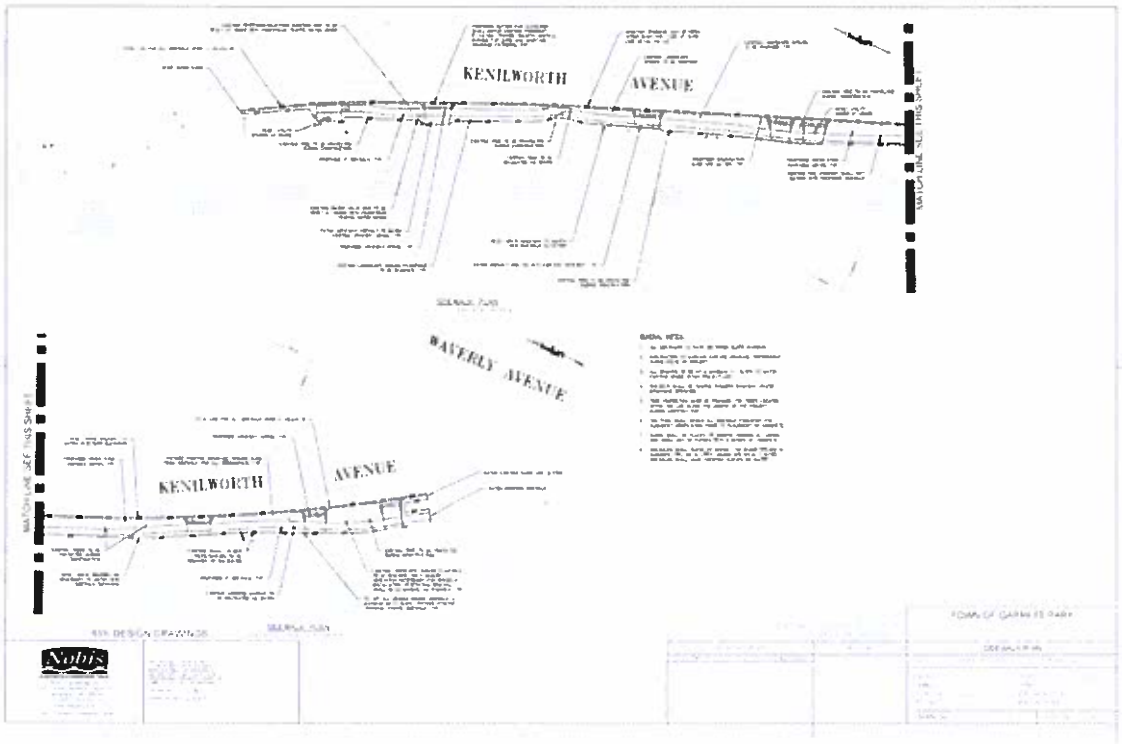
Sidewalks provide enhanced mobility options, increase safety, and promote health by encouraging walking and biking. They provide these benefits not only during the few hours that children travel to and from school, but at all hours of the day and night. Thus although this project is specifically designed to provide safe routes to school, it has many other immediate benefits to persons of all ages and abilities and at all times of the day. The purpose of the project is to provide these benefits not only today but for many years into the future.

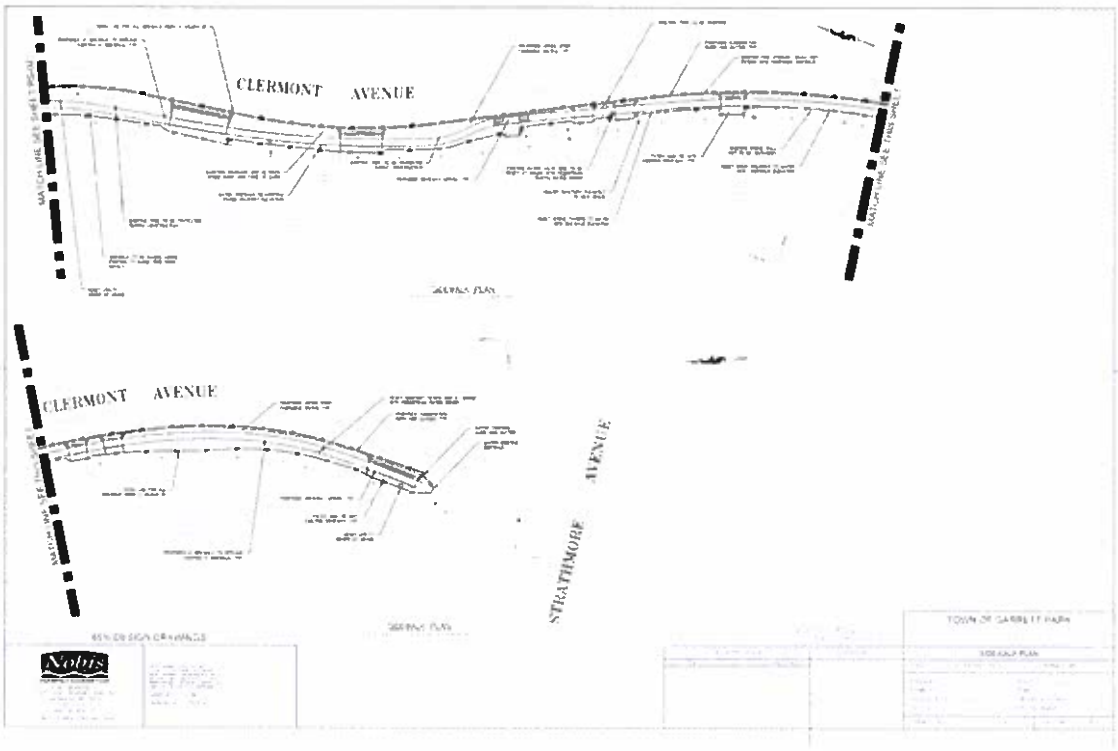
Project Plans

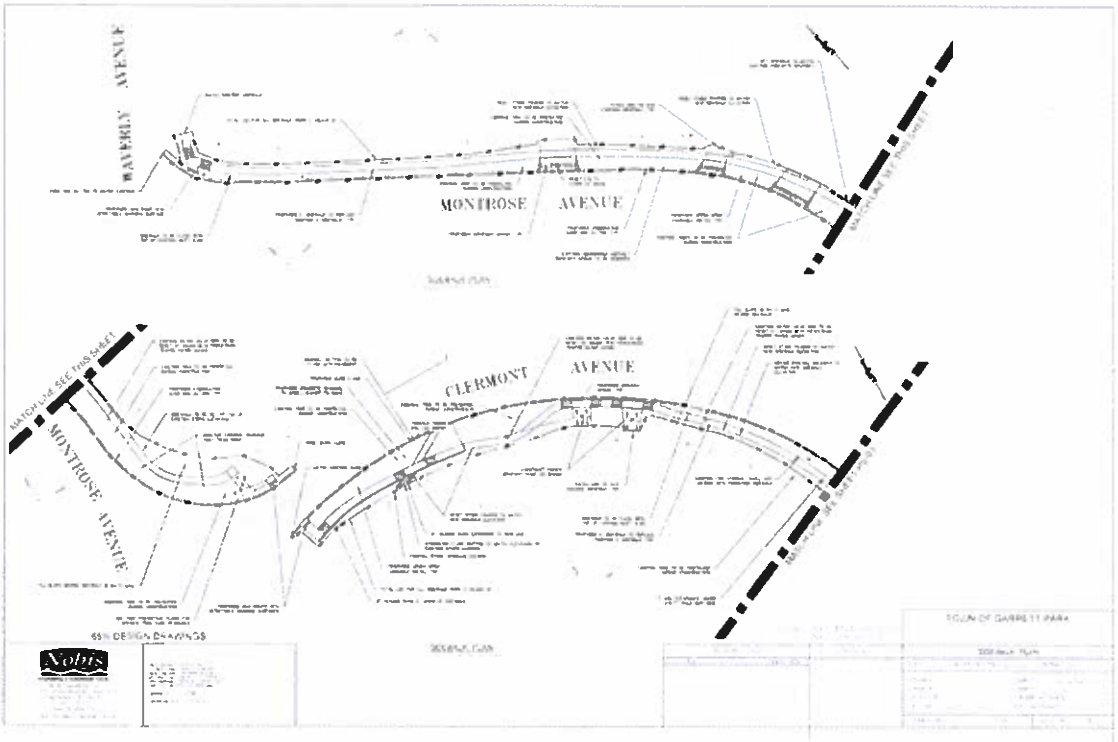
The chart below shows the existing sidewalk system in Garrett Park and the proposed extension and rehabilitation projects under the Safe Routes to Schools grant. The light gray dashed lines are the existing sidewalks, one of which extends along Montrose and Clermont Avenues. This sidewalk is in substantial disrepair and is proposed to be rehabilitated as shown by dark short dashes. The Kenilworth Ave. segment of the proposal, shown as a dark dashed line with three short light dashes, is an extension of the existing Kenilworth sidewalk from Waverly Ave. to Argyle Ave. The existing Kenilworth sidewalk currently begins at the intersection with Waverly Ave. and continues across Strathmore Ave. to Oxford St, where it turns on Oxford to the Garrett Park Elementary School. The Oxford segment of the proposal is shown by solid dark lines, and extends an existing sidewalk on Oxford St. beginning at the school and currently terminating at the intersection of Oxford and Montrose. It would continue along Oxford to the eastern edge of town at Weymouth St.



The preliminary design plans for the Garrett Park sidewalks project were completed in 2016, have been shared with the residents of the town, and have been the subject of three public hearings, culminating in a vote by the Town Council to implement the sidewalks project. The Town engineer has now completed the 65% designs for the project, as are shown in the 5 drawings below.




CLERMONT AVENUE
CLERMONT AVENUE
STRATHMORE AVENUE
Nobis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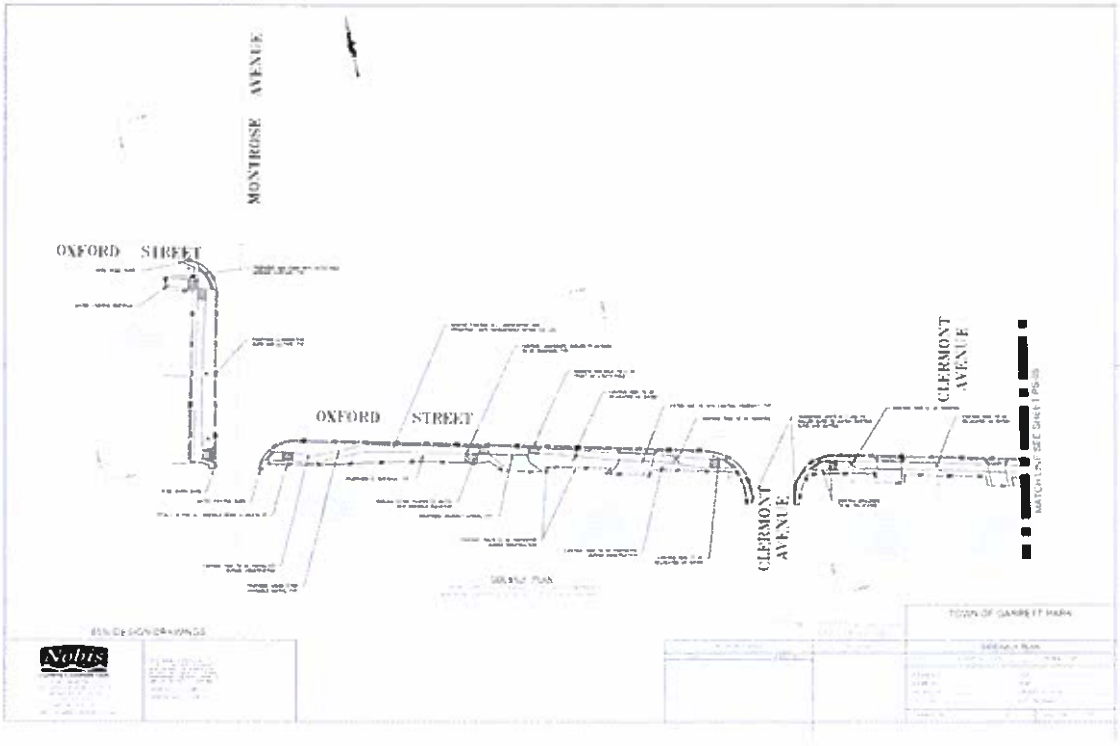
MONTROSE AVENUE
OXFORD STREET
OXFORD STREET
CLERMONT AVENUE
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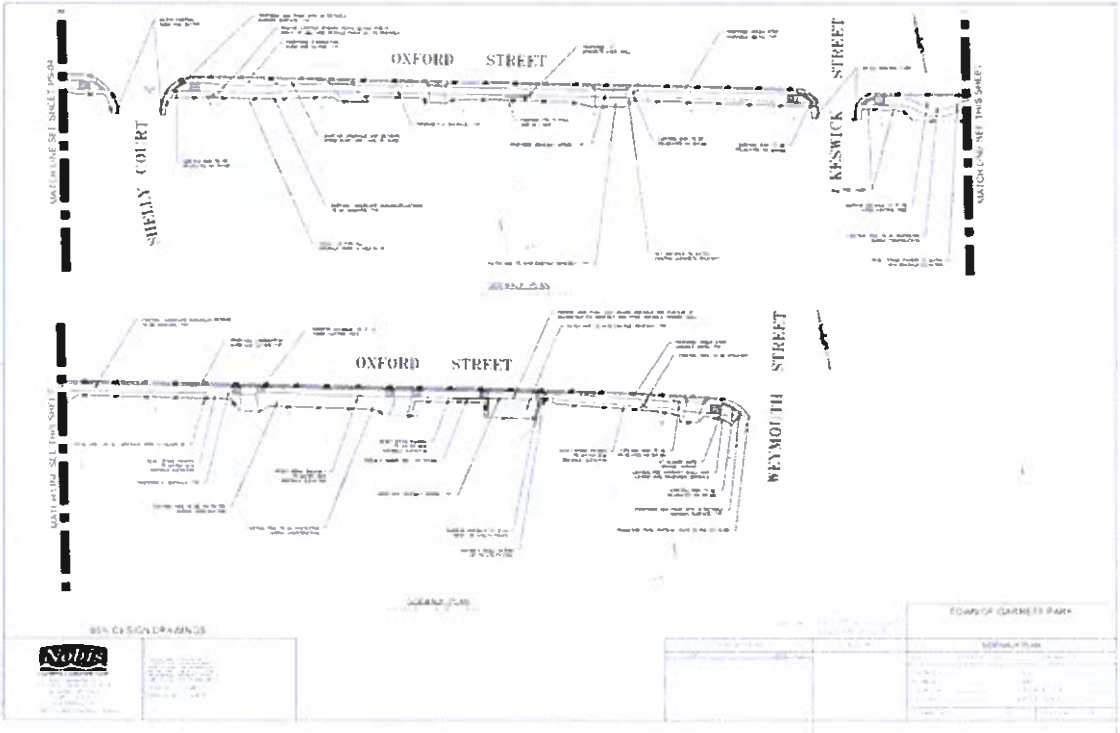
OXFORD STREET
SHELLY COURT
KENSWICK STREET
OXFORD STREET
WEYMOUTH STREET
Nobis

The Garrett Park Town Office can provide hard copies of the plans or they may be viewed on or downloaded from the Garrett Park Town website, item PS01-05. To meet the Montgomery County stormwater management requirements, the sidewalk project also includes a stormwater management component which is designed to alleviate erosion at a point where a stormwater pipe empties into an open gully in the Town-owned Porcupine Woods Park. The stormwater project has been approved by the County and is also shown on the above website, items SR01 and SWM Concept Approval.

Here is a summary of what is proposed for the sidewalk construction:

- The sidewalk will be four feet wide except where it will be narrowed to no less than three feet to avoid trees and other objects, and will broaden to five feet at driveways and crosswalks to accommodate Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- The entire project will be built totally within existing Town right of way. No private property will be used. The associated stormwater project has required an easement, which has been obtained from the owners of an adjacent property.
- Sidewalks will have gentle curves where possible to be consistent with the curving nature of the town's roadways.
- All existing driveways will get new concrete driveway aprons.
- Curbs and gutters will be constructed to allow better storm water management and to eliminate current discontinuities.
- Sidewalks and curbs will be tinted (colored) concrete to allow them to fit into the visual landscape and avoid the jarring effect of bright white smooth concrete. Curbs will be rolled concrete (curved shape rather than angular) to give them a more gentle appearance.
- No existing off-street parking will be eliminated; no resident will have to park on the street because of this project.
- Four trees will be removed and replaced, as recommended by the Town Arboretum Committee: One very old and large tulip poplar which is in declining health and would have to be removed soon anyway, one small pin oak in declining health, one red maple in declining health will be removed, and one very small maple will either be transplanted or replaced. One tree that was not specifically identified by the Arboretum Committee is shown for removal on the plans at the request of the property owner.
- Consistent with Montgomery County requirements, the Town will plant 17 new trees at the completion of the project. In summary, the sidewalk will have a positive effect upon the Town's tree cover.
- All of the trees of any size that are close to the sidewalk will get tree root bridges to protect their roots. Some, but not all, of these are noted in the plans.

It is important to consider why these particular segments have been chosen for new sidewalks or the rebuild of an existing sidewalk. Streets in Garrett Park are relatively narrow, and Oxford St., at 18 feet wide, is among the narrowest. Automobiles generally use about six feet or more along the side of the street when parked, so when cars are parked on both sides of the street, as illustrated for Oxford in this photo, the parents and children walking to school (in the distance in the photo) are directly in the line of all traffic flow.

If trucks are parked on the street, or are moving in a narrow corridor, the conflict between pedestrians and moving vehicles is exacerbated. This is illustrated in this photo, taken on Oxford, in which there are cars parked on only one side of the street and a truck is backing up directly toward a child and parent on their way to school. It is apparent that the truck takes up almost the whole road remaining with cars parked on only one side of the street. Even when cars are parked in a manner in which a larger path is provided by allowing the moving cars to weave around the parked cars, the moving vehicles come very close to pedestrians and sometimes the parked cars or trucks make visibility of pedestrians who must step out from behind parked cars difficult for the moving ones. In summary, when a street is this narrow, it is difficult to find any configuration, other than no parking at all, which does not result in a potentially dangerous conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. Ironically, parked cars actually provide some benefit, in that they encourage traffic calming. Banning parking, unfortunately, results in faster auto speeds.

As mentioned above, the proposed Oxford St. sidewalk is an extension of an existing sidewalk on Oxford which starts at the school and extends to Montrose Ave. The traffic pattern to and from the school at the beginning and end of the school hours is Kenilworth Ave. inbound and Oxford and Montrose outbound. Many cars on Oxford at the corner of Montrose, observing the back up at the intersection of Montrose and Strathmore, continue for one or more blocks along Oxford to enter Strathmore at a less congested point. The proposed new sidewalk on Oxford is along this congestion avoidance route. Oxford is also the only street in town that parallels Strathmore for the length of that state highway (Rte 547) through the town. It is, therefore, the primary relief when Strathmore is blocked or extremely congested. Whenever such events occur, many drivers on Strathmore use Oxford to circumvent the problem area, and are generally in a hurry. It is another reason that separating pedestrians from traffic along this street is desirable.

Garrett Park is experiencing demographic and life style changes that alter the nature of the need for separation of traffic and pedestrians. There is currently an influx of young, two-worker families with young children, with a concomitant demand for a safe way for children to walk, ride bikes, and play without risking conflicts with moving traffic. Many residents no longer mow their lawns and tend to their gardens, resulting in an increase in the number of trucks moving through the town and parking along the streets. The use of the internet to purchase items that are shipped to homes has increased the number of FedEx, UPS, and Amazon trucks delivering parcels. There is also an increasing number of drivers who ignore speed limits and traffic control signs, resulting in a greater potential for an accident involving a pedestrian.

At the same time the Garrett Park Elementary school, with a capacity of 400 students, was exceeding that capacity and has been rebuilt into a school with twice the capacity, with most of the students traveling to school either by bus or in personal autos. This has vastly increased the number of vehicles traveling on town streets, particularly Kenilworth, Oxford, and Montrose. The new school, after twelve years of operation, is now exceeding its capacity and temporary classrooms are being constructed. That, of course, is going to exacerbate the traffic problems.

Along the Kenilworth sidewalk extension it would appear that the contours of the land were created either to accommodate a wider road or a sidewalk, as shown in this photo.

The lower flat portion is at street level and is within the Town right of way. Then there is a rise to a higher flat portion, and finally a second rise to the house. Kenilworth is the longest street in town, and extends from near the northern tip of Garrett Park past the Oxford St. entrance to the school to the southern edge of the town. As such it accommodates some of the heavier traffic volumes in the town. A series of hills and dips makes visibility more limited, particularly in the segment proposed for the sidewalk extension.

The Montrose/Clermont sidewalk was built in 1967 and is an asphalt strip which varies in width from less than two feet to about three feet. Trees close to the sidewalk have grown significantly and their roots have damaged the surface, causing buckling and cracking. There has been little repair or rehabilitation of the sidewalk over the years, and its level of disrepair, as shown in the following photos, is substantial.



At present many people avoid using the sidewalk and walk in the street because the sidewalk is difficult, and potentially dangerous, to navigate. The proposed sidewalk rehabilitation is to reconstruct the existing sidewalk essentially in the location of the current one, but to widen it to between three feet and four feet, depending upon the nearby obstructions, and to replace the asphalt with the same materials used in the other segments, tinted exposed aggregate concrete. Driveway aprons and curbs would be constructed of the same material. Tree root bridges would protect trees with roots that extend under the sidewalk path.

Historic Nature of the Town of Garrett Park

Garrett Park was developed by the Metropolitan Investment and Building Company, which was formed in1886 for the express purpose of creating the suburb. Garrett Park was named after Robert W. Garrett, President of the B&O Railroad, reflecting the importance of linking the community with Washington DC, and emphasizing the role of transportation to its existence, a priority which has continued to the present. The Metropolitan Investment and Building Company hired John L. Freeman to lay out the plan of the development and Professor William Saunders as the landscape architect. It also published in 1887 its vision for the community in its booklet, "Garrett Park, Where it is and What it Offers, Information for Home-Seekers and Investors." Two drawings of houses proposed to be built in Garrett Park included in the booklet are reproduced here and depict people strolling down sidewalks. It would appear that the concept of the community proffered by those who hired the planner and the landscape architect incorporated sidewalks.

The Town of Garrett Park was incorporated in 1898, and apparently its first charter also contemplated that the town would have sidewalks. Section 13 of the charter enumerated the powers of the Town Council, including Paragraph 3, which read, "To establish the grades of streets, gutters and sidewalks, fix the width thereof and describe the material of which they shall be constructed; to cause the sidewalks along public streets to be graded, paved, repaved or improved…"

The co-chair of the Garrett Park Historic Preservation Committee, Nancy Schwartz, put together an excellent paper discussing the history of sidewalks in the town in preparation for a meeting in November 2014 to discuss the impact of sidewalks on the historic character of the town. Here are excerpts from the paper:

"It is known that two boardwalks were built on the south side of Town along Keswick and Pembroke (now Kenilworth) Streets. These boardwalks were in poor condition, and obviously old, when the Town Council first discusses them in 1900…The walks were on the only two streets on the south side of Garrett Park that had houses in the 19th century. Pembroke also had the Chapel and school. The south side, or "Village" area,

also had a grid plan in contrast to the winding streets of the north "Villa" section. Perhaps sidewalks were deemed appropriate for a more city-like street plan."

"In 1932, the owner of 10925 Kenilworth was authorized to build a sidewalk in front of his premises. Progress on this project was watched closely to assure that work adhered to specifications submitted by Mr. Dye to the Council. There was obviously enough interest in sidewalks that Mr. Dye had gone to the trouble to draft very detailed specifications for creating concrete sidewalks. Perhaps this was when the sidewalk along Waverly was built."

"In 1933 the Town applied for a CWA project to build a playground on land at the corner of Montrose and Waverly. Among the justifications: 'There are no sidewalks in Garrett Park. Which condition results in our small children playing in the street where they are liable to serious accidents from automobile traffic."

"In 1955 homeowners on Kenilworth asked for a sidewalk on the 10800 block 'for convenience of the many school children who pass there, and to prevent the destruction of lawns.' A blacktop walk from Strathmore to the school was quickly built."

"In 1961 there was a push to build a sidewalk – for the safety of school children – from Strathmore and Kenilworth to connect to an existing sidewalk on Waverly…Despite repeated requests for the sidewalk on Kenilworth, it was not built until 1969."

"In 1963 the sidewalk from Kenilworth to Montrose along Oxford was approved and built, again for getting children to school."

"The last major sidewalk construction was that associated with the reconstruction of Strathmore Avenue which resulted in concrete sidewalks along both sides of the busy state road."

It is apparent that sidewalks have been contemplated and have been constructed from the founding of the town until the present. Currently the town has sidewalks along parts of Kenilworth, Waverly, Montrose, Clermont, Strathmore, and Oxford, as shown here

and there are sidewalks in front of the most historic buildings in Garrett Park, as illustrated in these photos

Penn Place

Grace E.D. Spriggs house

Town Hall

as well as numerous older homes

Most of these sidewalks were in place before the town was declared a National Historic District in 1969. When the Town applied for National Historic District status, the application read, "Garrett Park is not a Williamsburg. It is a small suburban town that is still serving its original purpose after almost ninety years. It is a significant historic district because of the imprint of each of those ninety years, and because its nineteenth century village plan and its citizens have been able to incorporate these years of growth into a community that meets the needs of any age while maintaining its ties with the past." The writers of those words recognized the importance of incorporating change while preserving the historic character of the town. Garrett Park is not a museum to be kept in a constant state, but rather a community that meets the changing needs of its residents and the changes imposed upon the town by outside forces while retaining its values and character.

Relationship of Key Historic Characteristics to Project Plans

In its letter of November 25, 2013 giving its preliminary guidance to the Town relative to this project, the Maryland Historical Trust stated that the Garrett Park National Historic District "contains an assortment of well-preserved and representative architectural styles constructed between the 1890s to the mid-twentieth century. The historic district is significant since it represents the fulfillment of the original developer's plans for a sylvan residential community. The community's promotional brochure from 1890 describes the available building lots as "fronting on picturesque winding park roads." Another promotional pamphlet in 1887 states that noted horticulturist and landscape designer William Saunders provided the design and landscape plans for the community." In the previous section of this document, on the historic character of the town, additional material from the brochure showed that the developer that employed Dr. Saunders and published the brochure showed sidewalks along those winding park roads. It would appear that sidewalks, far from detracting from the original intent of the developer's vision, were an integral part of that concept for the new community.

As stated in the section on the historic character of the town it appears that the first charter of the town, presumably adopted in the end of the 19th century, specifically called for the construction and maintenance of sidewalks in the town. Furthermore, by the time that the Town of Garrett Park was declared a National Historic District in 1969, a fairly extensive network of sidewalks was already in existence, including in front of the most historic buildings in the town. It was also pointed out in the previous section that the application for that historic status specifically identified the capacity for change while respecting the past as one of the historic characteristics of the town which should be recognized in designating it as a historic district. All of these factors seem to indicate that sidewalks, far from being inimical to the historic character of the town, are in fact congruent with its history, so long as their design allows them to blend in with their luxurious and verdant surroundings.

In addition to being a National Historic District, the Town of Garrett Park is an arboretum, and the Town plants and maintains trees, shrubs, and other foliage along its right of way and in its parks. As such, the concern voiced by the Trust several times in its letter about the removal of mature trees and other landscaping is shared by the Town and was a central element in its development of a sidewalk plan. As stated in the section on proposed plans, only five trees are being considered for removal and replacement, all but one of which were recommended by the Town Arboretum Committee, and only one of those recommended for removal is large and mature, a tulip poplar over 100 years old, compromised by driveways built almost up to its trunk on two

sides, by a road against its trunk on another side, and by an existing sidewalk (proposed to be replaced) on the last side. Further, the Town has promised all adjacent property owners that it will work with them to move or replace shrubbery which they have planted within the Town right of way, and meetings with the adjacent property owners have already been held and will continue as the design progresses. The entire sidewalk project is proposed to be constructed within the Town right of way, and no private property takings are expected. The stormwater management project being carried out to meet the County requirements for the sidewalk project does require an easement from an adjoining property owner, which has been obtained.

The Trust letter commenting on this proposed project described one of the key historic characteristics of the town as being "building lots fronting on picturesque winding roads." As has been noted in the paper prepared by the co-chair of the Town Historic Preservation Committee on the impacts of sidewalks on the historic character of the town, "The south side, or 'Village' area, also had a grid plan in contrast to the winding streets of the north "Villa" section. Perhaps sidewalks were deemed appropriate for a more city-like street plan." Trust staff touring the proposed project also noted that the proposed Oxford St. sidewalk was in an area with a rectilinear street layout, rather than the "picturesque winding park roads" called out as a historic characteristic of the town in the Trust letter. Further, there is only one older home along the right of way for the sidewalk proposed to be built on Oxford. The remainder have been built more recently than 1950. Photographs of these homes are below.

4400 Oxford

4402 Oxford

4404 Oxford

4406 Oxford

4408 Oxford

10712 Keswick

4508 Oxford

10707 Shelley Ct

10710 Shelley Ct

10715 Clermont

4600 Oxford

10711 Montrose

4700 Oxford

The Clermont Ave proposed sidewalk is a rebuild of an existing sidewalk, and presumably would not create any significant new historic impact on the character of the town. On Kenilworth Ave. the project is a one-block extension of an existing sidewalk. There are a number of older homes, but as has been pointed out in a previous section, the topography seems to have created in terraces which place the homes one or two flat levels above the sidewalk, thereby reducing the visual impact of the sidewalk. The homes along the Kenilworth portion are shown below.

11002 Kenilworth

11006 Kenilworth

11010 Kenilworth

11014 Kenilworth

11016 Kenilworth

11018 Kenilworth

11022 & 11024 Kenilworth

existing sidewalk being extended

It seems as though climate change has made many of the storms experienced in this area recently more severe, resulting in floods in many homes in the town. The town

also unceremoniously dumps all of its storm water onto its neighboring communities, from whence it contaminates Rock Creek. Recognizing its responsibility to protect property and preserve the environment as well as its historic character, the Town is developing a comprehensive stormwater management plan of which the curbs proposed for this project will be a part.

It its letter to the Town the Trust asked the Town give "careful consideration of context sensitive design solutions [that] will help to avoid and minimize adverse effects to the district...A landscaped buffer area should be maintained between the roadway and the sidewalk. The sidewalk should use a graceful curving alignment and appear as though a pathway has naturally occurred. Alternative materials should be used for the sidewalk such as tinted concrete with exposed aggregate...All efforts should be made to maintain existing mature trees and landscaping to avoid impacts to these character defining features of the district." The Town has adopted most of these criteria in the design process, but has dropped the use of exposed aggregate concrete, and believes that the proposed design reflects the care and sensitivity to the historic character of the town requested by the Trust.

It is the belief of the Town that the proposed sidewalk project, far from being a detriment to the character of the town, is, in fact, fully consistent with the history of the town's development from the very beginning, is a logical continuation of a sidewalk network which has existed long before the town became a National Historic District, and will be constructed in a manner that protects the existing landscape and tree cover, minimizes visual intrusion, and respects and reflects the historic character of the town.

Alternatives to Sidewalks Considered

There is little doubt that separating pedestrians from traffic is the safest way to encourage walking and to protect the walker. It is for this reason that the State of Maryland has endorsed the construction of sidewalks and is promoting programs that enhance health and safety by building sidewalks. The Town did examine several no build alternatives to its proposed sidewalk project.

No Change If one truly believes that walking in streets with no protection from autos and trucks is as safe as providing sidewalks, including for unaccompanied children walking, biking, and playing; for persons pushing strollers; and for persons with disabilities, including those using crutches, walkers, canes, and wheelchairs, and those who are blind, deaf or have developmental disabilities; then this is an attractive alternative. That is not the position of the Town of Garrett Park.

Walking School Bus In this alternative volunteer adults accompany groups of children to and from school on a structured and scheduled basis, assuring their safety by looking out for traffic and controlling the children. Without the scheduling this alternative is already occurring in Garrett Park. Many children going to and from school are accompanied by parents to try to assure their safety. It is precisely members of this group of parents who are most vociferously demanding the installation of sidewalks because they do not believe that, even with their best efforts, the children are safe from traffic. They relate many incidents of "close calls."

Community Education Educating all residents about the ways to minimize risk while walking in the streets is reputed to be a technique to enhance safety in those cases in which construction of sidewalks is inappropriate or unfeasible. Unfortunately there is no way to assure that residents will avail themselves of such educational opportunities and substantial evidence that they probably will not. It also does not provide much help to the youngest, elderly, and disabled members of the community.

Traffic Control: Making Oxford St. One Way Toward the School This is proposed as a way to constrain the traffic on this street to a more manageable level. It does not provide any benefit to the Clermont/Montrose and Kenilworth portions of the proposed project, as is the case with the Oxford options discussed below. It is also proposed to be implemented only when school is opening and closing. It is not clear to what degree one-way traffic would reduce traffic or increase safety. By causing more cars to use the Montrose/Strathmore intersection, it would further overload an already backed-up corner. It would also hamper access by residents who live on or south of Oxford to and from their homes. Without a police force, the Town would be unable to enforce the

provision and many drivers already violate the one-way restriction on Kenilworth during school opening and closing periods. Discussions with the Montgomery County Police Department about increasing County enforcement of all traffic laws in the town have resulted in the police declining to do so because of limited resources and more significant priorities. Examining whether it would be reasonable for the Town to have its own police force has shown the cost to be prohibitive for the benefits gained, and renting the time of police officers would probably require an increase in Town tax rates. Again, enforcement would be valuable only for a limited portion of the Town's goals for the sidewalks, and at considerable expense. Perhaps most significant, there is no other street which parallels busy Strathmore Ave. from one end of the town to the other and Oxford is the alternate route of choice for many drivers, including residents of the town, when Strathmore is backed up or blocked. It is not clear what effect this option would have on Strathmore traffic, but drivers frustrated with a traffic backup on Strathmore would find themselves trapped with no options other than to return to Strathmore at or before their "bail out" point, or ignore the one-way signs. This option has the potential for exacerbating the problem rather than solving it. It also does little to help with safety other than possibly before and after school and does little to help the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Traffic Control: Making Oxford One Way with No Entry Signs for before and after school hours at the intersection of Montrose and Oxford to discourage traffic entering in the direction from the school. This slight variation on the above might cause a few more drivers to obey the rule, but would suffer from the same problems as above.

Traffic Control: Making Oxford One Way with Barriers placed at the intersection of Montrose and Oxford to discourage traffic entering in the direction from the school before and after school hours. The Town has only two maintenance staff persons, so placing and removing the barriers would be a major burden. It would possibly be more effective than the "do not enter" option, but at substantial cost and with the same disadvantages.

Traffic Control: Limit Traffic on Oxford to Residents Only If this were obeyed it would probably reduce traffic along Oxford somewhat, but it is not clear how it would be enforced.

Traffic Control: No Parking on One Side of Oxford This would reduce the problem of moving cars weaving around parked cars and would provide increased visibility of pedestrians and cars coming from the opposite direction. It would also improve the ability of pedestrians to see approaching cars. It may have the contrary effect of providing a straight line opportunity to drive faster. Unfortunately the no parking regulations in town are routinely violated by landscaping and delivery trucks, of which there are increasing numbers, as well as visitors and some residents, and the Town has no effective enforcement mechanism.

Traffic Control: No Parking on Both Sides of Oxford This has all the advantages and disadvantages of the previous option but provides no place for residents with no or limited off-street parking to leave their cars, and provides no legal option for landscaping and delivery trucks.

Traffic Control: Install more speed bumps on Oxford Installation of speed bumps in Garrett Park has been a very controversial item, and only a limited number have been installed throughout the town, including along all of the streets included in the proposed sidewalk project. It is not clear that excessive automobile speed represents the greatest risk to pedestrians. Distracted or unobservant driving would seem to be more of an issue, based upon the reports of those who accompany their children to school. This option would do little for persons who have disabilities.

Traffic Control: Install more speed limit signs The speed limit throughout town is 20 mph, and signs are posted at all entry points to the town, including one block away from all streets accessing Oxford from Strathmore. This proposal was adopted by the Town, with an increased number of speed limit signs deployed. It has not resulted in any noticeable change in driver behavior.

Traffic Control: Narrow Oxford Narrowing a street is considered to be an effective mechanism for causing divers to reduce speed. Oxford, however, is already one of the narrowest streets in town, with drivers often complaining that navigating the street when there are cars parked there is difficult. Narrowing the street further, even with parking restrictions, would make conflicts between cars going in opposite directions more common, and could make access by emergency vehicles impossible. This would replace one problem, excessive speeds, to the extent it occurs, with another, direct vehicle conflicts and potential constraints upon emergency vehicle access.

Traffic Control: Install Stop Signs at Intersections on Oxford This proposal appears to be a way to encourage caution and control speeds along Oxford to, at a minimum, increase pedestrian protection while crossing streets at corners. The Town has placed several additional stop signs and stop lines along Oxford and intersecting streets, and has repainted pedestrian crossing markings. At the intersection of Kenilworth and Oxford, which has sidewalks and is beyond the limits of this proposal, it appears to have had a salutary effect. The observed result elsewhere is that cars are slowing down at intersections, with a few stopping, and then gunning their engines after the intersection. It may have increased safety at the intersections, but does not appear to have done so between them.

Constructing a New Street to Access the School This proposal would involve constructing a road between the Garrett Park Elementary School parking lot and Strathmore Avenue, thereby reducing the school traffic on the first block of Kenilworth South of Strathmore, on the first two blocks of Oxford east of the school, and on one

block of Montrose. Those portions of Kenilworth and Oxford involved already have sidewalks, so this proposal would not affect pedestrians using those streets. It would improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Oxford and Kenilworth, but that issue is beyond the proposed sidewalks project because sidewalks already exist at that intersection. The project is also beyond the town boundaries, so building a street in that location is not within the jurisdiction of the Town. Discussions with representatives of the Montgomery County Public Schools and with The Montgomery County Department of Transportation have evidenced little interest in the proposal. If implemented, the proposal would also involve redesign and reconstruction of the parking facilities at the school and probably the abandonment of the traffic signal at Kenilworth and Strathmore, which has taken more than 50 years for the Town to obtain, and replacing it with one at Strathmore and Flanders, just a few yards away. It would decrease safety for all town residents with no benefit as an alternative to construction of any part of the proposed sidewalk project.

In summary, the Town has considered numerous alternatives and has found all of them to be wanting compared to the benefits of sidewalks.

Alternatives to Proposed Plan Considered

Numerous suggestions have been made and considered as to materials for sidewalks that would minimize the impact of the proposed project upon the historic character of the town. These are discussed below.

Grass Path This would consist of leveling an area approximately three to four feet in width along the proposed sidewalk route, freeing it from existing plantings and trees, and planting grass as the walking surface. This option would blend into the landscape effectively and would separate pedestrians from traffic. It would require small retaining walls to maintain a flat surface which would still be made of a more substantial material, probably concrete. Walking on the grass would kill the living surface, resulting in a dirt and mud surface. As a result, this is a higher maintenance option, requiring mowing and regular removal of intrusive plants, as well as repeated seeding or periodic installation of turf. It would become muddy and slippery in rain and would be impossible to shovel in snow. It would be difficult for persons pushing strollers, for users of wheelchairs and crutches, and visually impaired persons, and would not provide good traction on slopes. It would not be ADA compliant.

Gravel Path Some of the detriments of the grass path option could be ameliorated by using gravel instead of grass but would be more visually intrusive. It would not have to be mowed, but removal of weeds and other intrusive plants would be more difficult. It would not be as muddy, but over time dirt would intrude into the gravel, requiring additional layers. It would be difficult to shovel in snow and would retain ice. It would not be conducive to strollers, wheel chairs, and persons with canes. It would not be ADA compliant.

Wood Chip Path This option would be less visually intrusive than gravel but more so than grass, and would provide a more comfortable walking surface than gavel. The path material would have to be renewed frequently as the wood chips would be dispersed by rain, and indentations created by water flows through the material could create tripping hazards. Weeds intrude on this surface, requiring maintenance, and it would be impossible to shovel in snow without removing a portion of the surface in the process. There are such paths within the town, and they do suffer these problems. In many ways wood chip surfaces provide the same or greater impediments to persons with disabilities as those discussed above, and are again not ADA compliant.

Boardwalk This option is often used in areas where ADA compliant paths are desired and is certainly consistent with the boardwalks installed early in the town's history. They must be built above the ground level, which makes them more visually intrusive than other options, and may require railings if the installation rises sufficiently above ground level. Because they are raised, they do not require retaining walls, do not intrude upon tree roots and are compatible with surrounding vegetation. They can be

shoveled to remove snow with some difficulty. They have a short life span and require continual maintenance to assure safety. To be ADA compliant on steeper slopes, they would have to weave across the right of way.

Permeable Surfaces This option was greatly desired by the town until it was explored more fully. It is environmentally attractive and controls stormwater flow. Unfortunately it has to perk into the ground and much of the subsurface in Garrett Park is clay, so significant subsurface excavation would be required which would be incompatible with retaining existing trees. It is also a high maintenance option in areas with substantial pedestrian traffic, which requires frequent vacuuming with special equipment. It also can be difficult to shovel in the snow. In areas with trees the falling detritus intrudes into the spaces in the surface and over time clogs it, even with vacuuming, making it impermeable. Discussions with organizations that have installed these surfaces for pedestrian use confirm these concerns, and even manufacturers of the surfaces have discouraged its application in situations such as Garrett Park.

Asphalt This material is viewed by some as more attractive and less visually intrusive than concrete. It does not have the range of colors which might make concrete less visually intrusive and to blend better with a historic setting. Asphalt is more flexible than concrete, which has some advantages, but to be stable may require a deeper subsurface base, and when used in applications such as curbs is easily destroyed by snow plows. That flexibility makes it more difficult to install with a 2% cross-slope, which provides for drainage while maintaining a level walking surface. It would generally require a 3" to 6" stone base with a 3" to 6" asphalt layer above it and would be rolled to compress the materials. This can make it less compatible than concrete in preserving tree roots. It also has a tendency to decay along its edges and has an overall greater life cycle cost than concrete in a sidewalk application. Even given those detractions, it would not be rejected by the Town if a strong case were made that it would be more effective in this proposed project.

Tinted Concrete This option was specifically called out in the letter sent by the Trust as one to be considered and is the preferred choice of the Town. The tinting can overcome the bright white glaring effect of newly-poured concrete, and make the sidewalk look as though it has been there for a long time. This proposal originally included making sidewalks from exposed aggregate concrete, which has a look more like concrete mixes that were used in previous years and also has the look of a surface that has aged. It is substantially more expensive to install and maintain and has a shorter life span than regular concrete. After much consideration, the Town has opted not to use aggregate unless the Maryland Historical Trust has an extremely strong preference for it.

Rolled Concrete Curbs Rolled or "mountable" curbs provide a softer effect than angular vertical (rectangular) curbs, and when made of tinted concrete can reflect the image of the historic stone gutters which graced the town in earlier years. It would be the choice of the Town in this application.

Vertical Curbs Both the Town Sidewalk Citizens Advisory Committee and the Town Historic Advisory Committee have indicated some possible preference for vertical curbs. There is some concern that mountable curbs may be a safety concern because cars and trucks can drive over them onto the surface beyond, posing a potential hazard to pedestrians. This option has been discussed with the Maryland Historical Trust and residents along the sidewalk routes have been surveyed for their preference. As a result, the Town is opting for rolled concrete curbs throughout the project.

It is important to note that the advantages and disadvantages of various transportation options, construction techniques, and materials used in their implementation can be debated endlessly. The records of the Transportation Research Board are rife with such debates by national and international experts that have extended over many years with no definitive conclusions. The purpose of the two sections on alternatives in this document is not to provide incontrovertible truths, since those much more knowledgeable than the persons preparing this document have been unable to agree on those truths. The purpose of these two sections is to demonstrate that the Town has considered alternatives in a reasonable manner, consulting various transportation experts, and has come to its own conclusions, with which others may differ.

Proposals to Mitigate Impacts upon Historic Properties and Characteristics of the Town

The Town of Garrett Park is dedicated to preserving its historic character, and has taken numerous actions in the development of this project to protect trees and plants, to minimize the size and visual impact of the sidewalk, and to cause it to be consistent with the principles established in the early development of the town. The Town has paid special attention to the suggestions made by the Maryland Historical Trust in its letter of November 25, 2013. Specifically,

Suggestion: Since the sidewalks are not located along state roadways, the sidewalks only need to adhere to the federal ADA standards instead of state standards.

Plan: The Town has obtained SHA agreement to this proposal. The sidewalk will be four feet wide instead of five feet except where it will be narrowed to no less than three feet to avoid trees and other objects, and will broaden to five feet at driveways and crosswalks to accommodate Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Suggestion: The sidewalks should utilize a graceful curving alignment to avoid mature landscape and appear as though the pathway has naturally occurred.

Plan: As is apparent in the plans shown in this document, sidewalks will have gentle curves where possible to be consistent with the curving nature of the town's roadways. Even in those areas in which the street is linear, rather than curved, the plan calls for the sidewalks to curve gently around trees and mature plants and to accommodate the natural slopes of the land.

Suggestion: All efforts should be made to maintain existing mature trees and landscaping to avoid impacts to these character defining features of the district.

Plan: As discussed in a previous section, in the entire project only four trees will be removed and replaced, as recommended by the Town Arboretum Committee and one at the request of the adjacent homeowner: One very old and large tulip poplar which is in declining health and would have to be removed soon anyway, one small pin oak in declining health, one red maple in declining health will be removed, and one very small maple will either be transplanted or replaced.

In addition, to meet Montgomery County requirements, 17 trees will be planted after the sidewalks are constructed. All of the trees of any size which are close to the sidewalk will get tree root bridges to protect their roots. Some, but not all, of these are noted in the plans.

In summary, the sidewalk project will enhance the town's tree cover

Suggestion: Alternative materials should be used for the sidewalk such as tinted concrete with exposed aggregate or tinted asphalt.
Plan: As mentioned previously, sidewalks and curbs are proposed to be tinted (colored) concrete to allow them to fit into the visual landscape and avoid the jarring effect of bright white smooth concrete. Curbs are proposed to be rolled concrete (curved shape rather than angular) to give them a more gentle appearance. This proposal originally included making sidewalks from exposed aggregate concrete, which has a look more like concrete mixes that were used in previous years and also has the look of a surface that has aged. It is substantially more expensive to install and maintain and has a shorter life span than regular concrete. After much consideration, the Town has opted not to use aggregate unless the Maryland Historical Trust has an extremely strong preference for it.

Suggestion: A landscaped buffer area should be maintained between the roadway and the sidewalk.
Plan: The plans included in this document incorporate this request to the extent reasonable. The maintenance of a buffer must be balanced with the desire to minimize visual impact and blend into the existing topography. Increased use of retaining walls could accomplish this end, but would be in itself an impact. In at least one place the sidewalk is proposed to be placed as close to the road as possible in order to keep it away from an older home that is located close to the street, and in several cases it is proposed to be routed near the road to preserve existing plantings. This is an area which requires thoughtful tradeoffs and the Town believes that the current plans achieve that balance.

Finally it is important to note, as stated previously, that this project will be built entirely within the Town-owned right of way except for the easement already acquired for the stormwater management project. Other than that easement it will not require the use of any private land, historic or otherwise.

Community Outreach

From its earliest stages, this project has been conducted in a transparent and open manner, with extensive community outreach and involvement. Between the decision to apply for the grant by unanimous vote in an open meeting of the Council in December, 2012 and the vote by the Council in February, 2016 to reaffirm its unanimous decision in September, 2013 to implement the project there have been five formal hearings on whether to conduct the project; one open meeting for the 89 consulting parties on historic preservation and other interested persons to discuss its potential impact upon the historic character of the town; 48 opportunities to make presentations on the topic to the Town Council at its monthly meetings (at 11 of which such presentations were made); numerous open meetings of the Sidewalks Citizens Advisory Committee, the Historic Preservation Committee and the Arboretum Committee to discuss this project, a Town Council meeting, together with the Sidewalks Advisory Committee, with the new project engineering firm to discuss the issues prior to development of the 65% design plans; 35 email notices to residents about aspects of the project, discussions about the project, or potential decisions of the Council; 22 times when the monthly town newsletter reported on discussions of the subject in Council meetings; 12 times when the Letter from the Mayor included in the town newsletter contained discussions, progress reports, or explanations of the project; and continuous displays of the project status and upcoming meetings on the Town web site. A sidewalks project page was established on the Town web site and a special email address was created to allow residents to comment to the mayor and council members about the project.

On October 18, 2012, the Town received an email from one of its State delegates indicating that the State had just announced the availability of grants under the Safe Routes to Schools program and that a seminar on the program would be held on November 13 to explain eligible activities, application requirements, and other elements of the process. On October 20 the mayor forwarded the email to all Town council members suggesting that this may be an opportunity to rebuild the Montrose/Clermont sidewalk and to extend the Kenilworth and Oxford sidewalks. He asked if there was interest in attending the seminar to understand the program possibilities better. The council member in charge of streets and sidewalks attended the November 13 seminar and reported on the results, noting that a member of the Garrett Park Elementary School PTA was also at the seminar. The materials distributed at that seminar indicated that applications for funds were due by January 11, 2013.

In order to determine whether there was a commonality of interests, a meeting of PTA representatives, the Town manager, a council member, the mayor, and the school principal was held on November 28, 2012. At that meeting it was agreed that there was sufficient support among the attendees that all participating groups should check with their constituencies to decide whether to proceed with an application. An item to seek Town Council approval to apply for a grant was added to the agenda for the next

scheduled Town Council meeting, December 6, and the agenda was distributed via the town electronic mailing list on November 28 and posted on the Town bulletin board and the Town website.

As noted above, the Council discussed the potential project at the meeting of December 6 and voted unanimously to proceed with applying for the grant. The discussion and action were reported in the town newsletter. At the January Council meeting it was reported that the grant application had been filed, and the mayor's February letter in the town newsletter was dedicated to an explanation of the grant program and of the proposed project, including the purpose, estimated cost, location, extent, possible impacts, and public involvement. The letter stated, "It is important to note that this is only a proposal and a request for funds. No decisions have been made by either the Town or the State to proceed with the project. So far we have only developed a concept design and done preliminary costing in order to apply for the state funds. If we are awarded a grant we then would do more engineering, conduct public hearings, and work with residents affected to accommodate their desires to the maximum extent feasible. The proposal would come before the Town Council at least twice to allow public comment and determine the next steps – once before accepting the grant and a second time, after public hearings, to decide whether to go ahead with the project." The mayor's letter was also sent out to the town electronic mailing list. The opportunities for involvement by the residents were substantially more robust than that promise.

In a letter dated August 7, 2013 and received August 14, the State Highway Administration informed the town that it the grant had been awarded. The mayor immediately informed the Town Council, and after discussions with SHA about grant parameters, on August 22 notified the residents of the town of the grant award by the electronic mailing list and posting on the Town bulletin board and website. In the notice he also indicated that the full grant application and the award letter were posted on the Town website. The agenda for the September 9 Town Council meeting, distributed electronically and posted on the website and bulletin board indicated that at the meeting the Council would set a date for a hearing on whether or not to accept the grant. At that meeting the State legislative delegation presented the Town with a certificate of congratulations for receiving the grant and the Council established a hearing date of September 23 and scheduled a vote for the following Council meeting, October 14, with the vote on that day to be preceded by a second hearing. The hearings were announced that evening and posted as described in the previous instances. Both hearings were heavily attended.

At the October 14 meeting the Council unanimously approved a resolution to accept the grant and "to implement the design and construction project, subject to full public review of the project at the completion of preliminary design." It also instructed the mayor to "make all reasonable efforts to keep town residents informed of the progress of the project, and to solicit public input at critical decision points. To that end the mayor shall

appoint a Sidewalks Citizens Advisory Committee, which shall include at least two residents who own property adjacent to the proposed sidewalks, to assist the Town in implementing the project. The Committee shall consult with stakeholders and make recommendations to the Town," and directed "that the Town shall consult with homeowners who have property adjoining the Town right of way in which the project shall be built in order to ascertain and implement ways to minimize the impact of the project upon their homes and landscaping, consistent with constructing sidewalks and curbs, [and] the Town shall make all efforts to preserve trees and plantings wherever possible, to move them if required and reasonable, and to replace them if they must be removed and cannot be moved to another location." It finally stipulated "that the Town shall comply with all state and federal historic preservation, disability access, environmental protection, and watershed protection requirements in pursuing this project."

On October 20, 2013 the mayor notified the residents of the town of the appointed members of the Sidewalks Citizens Advisory Committee, its role and functions, and stated that it was "to assure that all interests and views of the town residents are considered as we begin the preliminary design and engineering of the project." This message was also disseminated by electronic mail and posting on the bulletin board and on the website. A separate page on the website was dedicated to communications and reports from the committee. Its first meeting was held on December 2, 2013. All meetings of the committee were announced in advance and attendance was open to all.

The sidewalks project was a key issue in the Council elections held in May, 2014. Two incumbent Council members who were strongly in favor of the project and were running for reelection were opposed by two candidates who strongly opposed the project. The positions of each candidate were published in the Town newsletter and were articulated in a candidates' debate, sponsored by the Citizens Association. The benefits and impacts of sidewalks were discussed community wide, with each side campaigning for its view and candidates. The incumbents won the election by a wide margin.

The Town received the 15% design plans for the sidewalks on October 14, 2014 and immediately posted them on the website and on the bulletin board. An email notice was sent out notifying residents stating, "The 15% sidewalk design drawings are now on the Town website on the Safe Routes to School page. These designs are preliminary for our review and comment. They give the approximate location of the sidewalks but include limited detail. The sidewalks will be 4 ft. in width except a few places where they will be 3 ft. to avoid obstacles. No substantial trees will be cut down under this plan and several will have special root protection, and all sidewalks will be well within the existing town right of way." The Sidewalks Citizens Advisory Committee, the Arboretum Committee, and the Historic Preservation Committee conducted reviews and developed detailed recommendations for changes and raised issues. The resulting reports were consolidated into one which was transmitted to SHA and the designers.

The comments were also posted on the website and email notification of their availability was sent out.

During 2014 the Town received many requests for individuals and groups to be consulting parties in the Section 106 historic preservation process. After consultation with the Maryland Historical Trust, the State Highway Administration, and the Federal Highway Administration it was determined that the Town should make such appointments. The Town decided to appoint any person or group requesting that status a consulting party. As stated above, there were 89 consulting parties appointed. On June 3, 2015 a group of nine of those consulting parties sent an email to the Town, SHA, and MHT requesting a meeting to talk about the historic impacts of the project upon specific historic properties and the historic character of the town. After consultation among the Town, SHA and MHT it was decided that the meeting should be convened by the Town. If the Town were the convener, it was necessary for all Council members to be invited to participate, which, under the Maryland Open Meetings Law, required the meeting to be announced and be open to the public. The attendance, timing, content, and structure of the meeting were discussed at the July 13 Council meeting and it was noted that a summer meeting might preclude attendance by many residents and consulting parties who were out of town. It was subsequently scheduled for September 15, 2015 and announced by email to all consulting parties and those persons on the Town mailing list, and was posted on the website and bulletin board. A special notice was also sent by email on July 31 reiterating the importance of the meeting and encouraging those who could not attend to send emails to the special mayor and town council address. The meeting was held on September 15 and was heavily attended by residents, town elected officials, and representatives of SHA and MHT.

The Town received the preliminary design drawings from SHA on December 7, 2015. They were disseminated to the town residents by email on December 8, posted on the bulletin board and on Dropbox, with links made available to the residents and posted on the web page which was temporarily replacing the website. With this distribution residents were informed that the Council would be asked at its December 14 meeting to schedule hearings on the project. Consistent with the Council resolution on October 14, 2013 calling for a decision on whether to proceed with the project after full public review of the project at the completion of preliminary design, the notice said that a Council vote on whether to proceed would be scheduled for the February 8 meeting. Two special hearings were scheduled and held on January 20 and January 26, 2016. A third was held prior to the discussion and vote on the project on February 8. Several notices were sent out and posted encouraging attendance and participation, and discussions of the merits of the project were carried out informally throughout the town, on a list serve, and through emails to the mayor and council. All three hearings and were very heavily attended. A proposed resolution authorizing the project was distributed on February 5

to give all parties time to consider its provisions. On February 8, 2015, after much testimony and discussion, the resolution passed, reaffirming the Council's October 14, 2013 action.

The sidewalks project was once again a key issue in the Council elections just held in May, 2016. The incumbent mayor, who was strongly in favor of the project and was running for reelection, was opposed by a mayoral candidate who was a leader of the group who opposed the project. One incumbent council member and one new council candidate, who were strongly in favor of the project, were opposed by a council candidate who was a member of the group who opposed the project. The positions of each candidate were published in the Town newsletter and were articulated in a candidates' debate, sponsored by the Citizens Association. The mayoral and Council incumbents, as well as the new Council candidate in favor of the sidewalks, all won the election by a wide margin.

On February 13, 2017 the Town awarded a contract to a new engineering firm to work on the sidewalk project. This firm, in contrast to the previous one, reported directly to the Town. This was immediately announced to the town residents by email and posting on the website and was an agenda item on the Town Council that evening. At the following Town Council meeting, held together with the Sidewalks Advisory Committee, on March 13 representatives of the new firm answered questions from the elected and appointed bodies, and from attending citizens. The engineers also heard the positions, concerns, and advice of the community prior to embarking on development of the 65% design plans. Those plans were completed on July 27 and posted on the website the next day, with email notifications going to town residents concurrently.

In parallel with the development of the 65% design drawings the Town and its engineering firm were discussing with Montgomery County how best to meet the County's stormwater management requirements. It was decided that the most effective action would be to carry out a project to prevent the erosion caused by the prior placement of a stormwater pipe at a point where the water enters a gully in a Town park. The County approved the concept on May 30, and the approval was posted on the Town website on May 31, with email notices immediately going to town residents.

In conclusion, the Town of Garrett Park government believes that the process of applying for and obtaining a grant to build the sidewalk project, and the decision making in carrying out all elements of the project design have been conducted in an extraordinarily open and participatory manner, with access to all parts of the process and the ability to participate in and comment on issues afforded to town residents, consulting parties, Town committees, and Federal, State, County, and local agencies and regulatory bodies.